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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: PENTAGON'S REPORT ON CHINESE MILITARY
GROWTH, TAIWAN'S UN REFERENDA

11. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused March 6 news coverage on the upcoming presidential poll and the UN referenda; on the government's Wednesday announcement of incentive measures to encourage overseas Taiwan businesses to return capital to Taiwan; on the island's consumer price hike, and on the U.S. primaries. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" discussed the Pentagon's recently released report on Chinese military growth and urged the voters to pay attention to China's increasing military threat to Taiwan. An op-ed in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" focused on a news report that Washington and Beijing will sit down and work together on drafting the military strength report for the next year. The article said the move will be a perfect opportunity for the United States to test whether China is willing to enhance its information transparency. A "Liberty Times" op-ed, on the other hand, discussed Kosovo's recent declaration of independence and said Taiwan should learn from Kosovo and vote to pass its UN referenda. End summary.

12. Pentagon's Report on Chinese Military Growth

A) "How Can the Ruling and Opposition Parties Turn a Blind Eye to Severe Chinese Military Threats against Taiwan?"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 720,000] editorialized (3/6):

"During the lead-up to the presidential election this year, China has yet to launch any verbal attacks or saber-rattling against Taiwan, and it seems at first glance that there are hardly any ripples across the Taiwan Strait for now. However, a U.S. Defense Department report on Chinese military strength released recently indicated that as of November 2007, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has deployed 990 to 1070 missiles across from Taiwan, and the number of missiles deployed is increasing at the speed of over 100 missiles per year, with their range, precision, and trajectory capacity being continually enhanced. The Taiwan government, on the other hand, has also detected a dramatic increase in unusual behavior from the PLA lately and has briefed the U.S. side on PLA movements via the Taiwan-U.S. military cooperation framework. The move has aroused concerns from the United States, which has thus launched close surveillance of PLA activities. As it stands, China has not slowed down its pace of military deployment against Taiwan, and the cross-Strait situation is in reality full of turbulent undercurrents. ...

"The contention of the March election seems now to have focused on cross-Strait policy and the future direction of the new leadership. It was originally a correct move to put the campaign focus on China policy, which is essential to Taiwan's survival. But the arguments over cross-Strait policy have only focused on the aspect of [the island's] westbound [investments] and overlooked their impact on [the island's] entire economy, politics and military. Taiwan is

falling into dangerous circumstances without really knowing or feeling it. ..."

B) "Are Washington and Beijing Being Honest with Each Other or Harboring Sinister Designs against Each Other?"

Chen Chung-chih, a Taipei County-based Ph.D. candidate, opined in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] (3/6):

"The U.S. Congress requires that the U.S. military release a report on Chinese military strength each year. The fact that Washington chose to release this year's report earlier than usual [indicated] that the United States is placing a bet on both sides -- namely, it has not only sought to remind Taiwan prior to the presidential election to keep on the lookout for a potential crisis across the Taiwan Strait, but has also tried to reduce the backlash from China by releasing its report earlier, so that it will not poison the atmosphere when U.S. President George W. Bush visits China in August. For Taiwan's part, it is noteworthy that in the future, Washington and Beijing will work together in drafting this military strength report. One cannot help but wonder whether the two sides are trying to be honest with each other or whether they are harboring sinister designs against each other. ...

"Washington has been adopting the 'an eye for an eye' strategy against China. Early last year, China shocked the international community by launching a missile to shoot down one of its satellites. The United States, in return, launched an interception missile from its Aegis-class cruiser, the USS Lake Erie, this year and destroyed another satellite. When Beijing demanded via its diplomatic channel that Washington reveal relevant data and information [of the missile launch], U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates generously expressed willingness to share 'part' of the data with China.

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"For the United States, both Washington and Beijing working together to draft the military strength report will be a perfect opportunity to test whether China is willing to enhance its transparency on information sharing. If China refuses to cooperate, it will provide solid proof of the U.S. theory that China's military growth will pose threats [to the United States]. On the contrary, should China show interest in cooperation, its neighboring countries, including Taiwan, will be able to positively assess whether China's military growth is a 'peaceful rise' or a 'China threat.'"

13. Taiwan's UN Referenda

"Taiwan's Rights"

Chen Lung-chu, president of the Taiwan New Century Foundation and director of the UN for Taiwan Alliance, opined in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 720,000] (3/6):

"... As an independent sovereign nation, Taiwan, like the other countries, is entitled to be free from invasion or coercion by external forces. China, however, has tried every means it can and will stop at nothing to suppress Taiwan's elbow room in the international community and block Taiwan's efforts to obtain UN membership. Unity is power. For the sake of the well-being of our descendants, we need to learn from the Kosovo people their spirit of asserting independence and [seek to] pass Taiwan's UN referenda with firm will and determination. That way we can show the international community Taiwan's common wish to become a UN member. God helps those who help themselves. Let us cast our referendum ballots in support of Taiwan's UN membership at this critical moment so as to create a new opportunity for Taiwan to become a normal country!"

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